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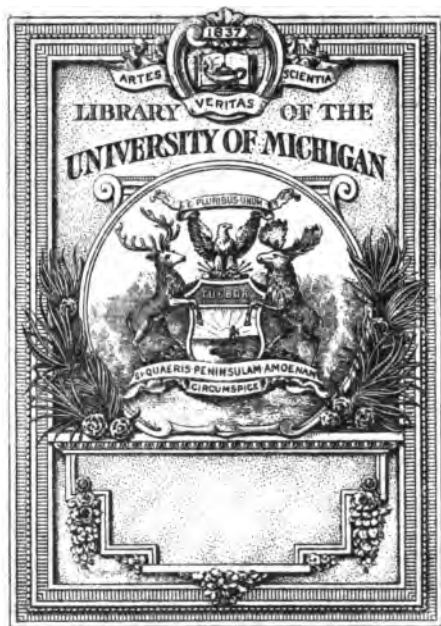
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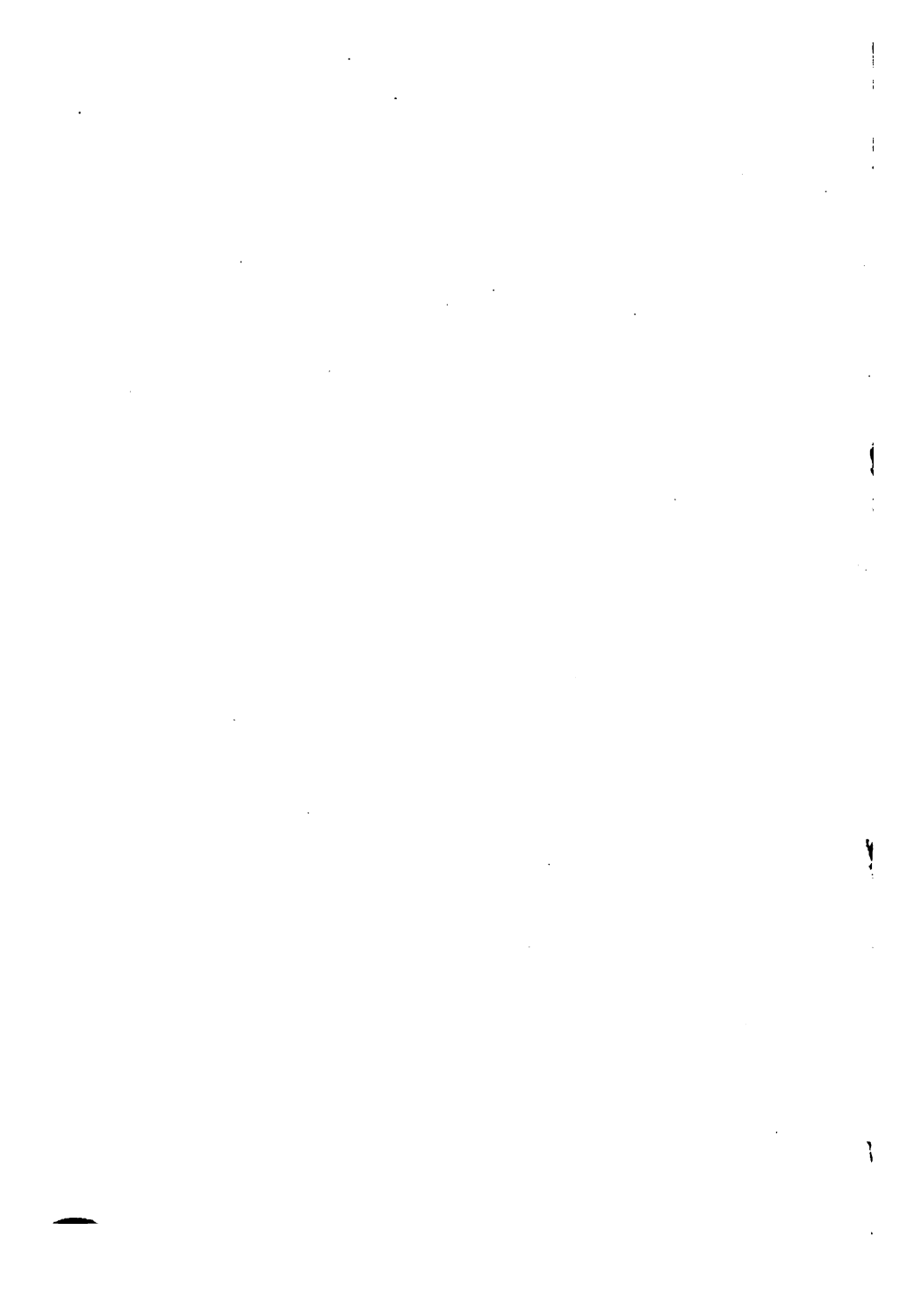
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# JEZEBEL



# J E Z E B E L

A DRAMA

BY

P. MORDAUNT BARNARD, B.D.

RECTOR OF HEADLEY, SURREY

*London:*

FRANCIS GRIFFITHS

34 MAIDEN LANE, STRAND, W.C.

1904





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## CHARACTERS

AHAB

JEZEBEL

ATHALIAH

ELIJAH

ELISHA

JEHU

BIDKAR

AHIJAH

JONAH

*The High Priest of Baal.*

*Priests of Baal and Ashtoreth, Choruses of Boys and Girls,  
Attendants, Slaves, etc.*



# JEZEBEL



## PROLOGUE

SCENE.—*A Valley near Jezreel.*

*Priests of Baal and Ashtoreth ; Chorus of Boys and Maidens ; People assembled in crowds, among them stands ELIJAH. AHAB and JEZEBEL seen approaching.*

*High Priest of Baal.* Lo ! the king and queen  
draw near,

Favoured by the gods above ;  
They have freed the land from fear,  
Won for it great Baal's love.

For their people they have wrought  
More than deeds of warlike might,  
Peace and plenty they have brought,  
Made us walk in Baal's light.

Now let the trumpets astound the still air,  
Now let your voices acclaim the blest pair. 10

*[Flourish of trumpets : as the KING and  
QUEEN enter, the Chorus sings :*

*Boys.* Hail to the glorious son of Omri !  
Hail to the ruler of Israel's tribes !  
Guiding his counsels with heavenly wisdom  
He hath obtained for us joys untold.

Blest the land whose king devoutly  
Worships Melkart, mighty lord,  
Pestilence and dearth 'tis freed from  
By the favour of the God.

Happy people, lift your voices,  
Praise with us great Omri's son. 20

Ahab, all hail to thee, servant of Melkart.

*Maidens.* Hail to the daughter of far-renowned  
Tyre !

Hail to the teacher of truth divine !  
Mindful of piety learnt in childhood,  
She hath revealed to us mystic rites.

Blest the land whose queen devoutly  
Worships star-born Ashtoreth,  
Health and riches are its portion,  
For the Goddess smiles on it.

PROLOGUE

9

Happy people, joining with us, 30  
Ethbaal's great daughter praise.

Jezebel, hail to thee, Ashtoreth's handmaid.

*All together.* Ahab and Jezebel, blest of the gods  
all hail.

*Ahab.* Full well this dear spontaneous burst of joy,  
Which from the crowd's untutored lips springs forth  
To join the practised choruses of boys  
And maidens, shows that we have known the way  
To win our people's love, by teaching them  
The gods' true worship. We with thanks accept  
Your loyal homage, even as 'tis meant, 40  
As rightly due to the great deities—  
To us, but as their representatives.  
We come to share in your glad sacrifice  
Of praise and thanksgiving for all the good  
You have received throughout a prosperous year.

*Jezebel.* The king hath well expressed, as is his  
wont,  
His pious thoughts; yet in his piety  
He hath too much abased himself: for, know,  
All homage you can pay is rightly due  
To awful monarchy: no pains can be 50  
Too great in preparation to receive  
Your rulers. Therefore should your words and  
songs  
Be fully practised and rehearsed before,  
Lest ought of imperfection harshly grate  
On royal ears, and mar your homage meet.

The king is God's dread counterpart on earth.

*Ahab.* Well saith the queen, as ever, and her words

But mould my thoughts and give them form and shape.

Now let the joyous sacrifice begin.

[*Chorus sings :*

*Boys.* Through the plain of rich Esdraelon, 60  
Girt about with wood-clad mountains,  
From Engannim's garden-fountains  
Runs that ancient river Kishon ;  
Past green fields in spring-time flowing  
When the sap of life was glowing,  
Crops of promise fair he looked on.

*Maidens.* As the days began to lengthen,  
Gaining on the night-time yielding,  
Baal, power almighty wielding,  
Bade the sun his rays to strengthen ; 70  
In the blade the ear was swelling  
Of a plenteous harvest telling  
When the yellow corn should ripen.

*Boys and Maidens.* Tread we now a rhythmic  
measure,  
Garlands of fair buds entwining,  
With the priests' weird chant combining  
Dances full of mirth and pleasure,  
Thanks and praise to Baal showing  
Since in garners overflowing  
We have stored the golden treasure. 80

[*The Chorus dance and weave garlands of flowers,  
while the Priests chant over the sacrifices :*

THE END

## PROLOGUE

11

*Priests.* Baal, Lord almighty, hear us  
Suppliants bending at thy feet ;  
For the mercies thou hast granted  
Deign to accept our offerings meet.

Firstfruits of the plenteous harvest  
Here we lay before thy throne,  
Symbols fit that all our increase  
Comes from thee, and thee alone.

For the future too we pray thee :  
Send us through the coming year 90  
Gentle rains and quickening sunshine  
That kind earth her fruits may bear.

Baal, Lord of all things, see before thy temple  
From the mystic number of the altars seven,  
Upward shoots the bright flame, all-devouring  
symbol,  
And the smoke is curling up towards thy heaven.

By the sacred altars, flower-bedecked for slaughter,  
Ready stand the oxen with their horns gold-plated,  
Ready stand the priests, their keen-set knives up-  
lifting.

Silence! silence! silence keep! while the holy  
victims die : 100  
Silence! silence! silence keep! for the mighty gods  
draw nigh.

## JEZEBEL

Out from the throats of the victims slain  
 Gushes the blood, dyeing the earth  
 Crimson around, and the gods of hell  
 Greedily come, taking their fill.

Up to the sky in the flame and smoke  
 Rises the scent, on the still air  
 Floating aloft, and the gods above  
 Drink in the sweet odour of blood.

By thy dread mysterious title, 110  
 Not to be named to ears profane,  
 Melkart, hear us now invoke thee ;  
 Hasten to taste our sacrifice.

Wooed by rites of awful magic  
 But to thy chosen priests revealed,  
 Yielding to our incantations,  
 Ashtoreth, taste our sacrifice.

*[A pause, while magic rites are silently performed.  
 Suddenly the Priests begin to dance, and chant :*

Ha ! the heaven-sent frenzy comes,  
 Making the dull blood to boil ;  
 Tear your skin with knife and lancet, 120  
 Frantic leap and dance amain.

From the self-inflicted wounds  
 See the crimson life-blood spurt ;  
 Rend your flesh in Baal's honour—  
 Ecstasy can feel no pain.



## PROLOGUE

13

Deeper, deeper drive the knife,  
Freely let the life-blood flow ;  
Ashtoreth will hear our crying,  
She will come within us soon.

Ha ! how warm the red blood feels      130  
Bursting from the riven veins ;  
Reeling leap and dance, still singing ;  
'Tis a vision, 'tis no swoon.

Now the feebly beating pulse  
Sends forth but a trickling stream ;  
Steals a quiet peaceful feeling—  
Ha ! he comes ! the God ! the God !

*[The Priests all fall fainting to the ground : after  
a time the High Priest rises, and says :*

By the weakness of the body  
Is the soul of man made strong.  
In our holy trance the future      140  
Baal doth to us reveal.

In the coming year he'll send us  
The early and the latter rains,  
Bless us with a larger harvest—  
I have said : I reel, I reel.      *[Falls again.*

*All the People.* Hail the words of goodly omen,  
Hail the promise from above ;  
We shall live in peace and plenty  
Blest in Baal's constant love.

*Elijah.* Hear me, king Ahab; as the Lord the  
God 150  
Of Israel liveth, before whom I stand,  
There shall be neither dew nor rain these years,  
But it shall be according to my word.

*People.* Seize on the traitor! seize him and kill  
him!

He hath blasphemed our God,  
Said Baal's promise shall not be fulfilled:  
Rend him now limb from limb.

Seize on the traitor! live he no longer,  
Foretelling dearth and want:  
Let him not live! false prophet of evil, 160  
Here let him die the death!

*Jezebel.* Ye multitudes, be calm, nor wildly think  
That Baal needs your aid: he will avenge  
Himself in his own time on all who would  
Withstand his power. Then let this fellow live  
To see how Baal vindicates himself  
And proves his promise true. Yea, I am glad  
That some one for the half-forgotten God  
Dare rise as spokesman, that now once for all  
Disputes and doubts be ended, and dread Baal 170  
Proved over all omnipotent. Here I,  
Daughter of great Ethbaal, Melkart's priest,  
And after king of Tyre, in Baal's name  
Challenge the so-called God Jehovah, once  
Named Israel's Lord, to do His worst on me  
And on my kindred, if indeed He be

## PROLOGUE

15

Stronger than Baal. Witness all this crowd  
My word and challenge. Let the self-called seer  
Live to acknowledge that the God of Tyre  
Is his Jehovah's master. But in case 180  
This evil leaven should begin to work  
Among the weaker sort, the traitorous wretch  
I hereby banish from the haunts of men,  
To dwell in holes and caves, on mountains bare  
Or in the forest's deep recess: let none  
Hold converse with him, or supply him food  
Or shelter; let him live on roots and herbs,  
Precarious livelihood! and see from far  
The plenty Baal sends, not sharing it.  
Jehovah feed His servant if He can. 190

*Elijah.* Hear all ye people: in Jehovah's name  
I undertake this challenge: in due time  
Jehovah will redeem the pledge, and show  
Who is the one true God of Israel.

END OF PROLOGUE.

## ACT I

### SCENE I.—*The Palace of Jezreel.*

JEZEBEL *alone.*

*Jezebel.* From the whole vault of heaven the rain  
descends,  
No idle show of barren wind-borne clouds  
Deceives my expectations. From all sides  
The affrighted peasants, joyful in their fright,  
Bring news of thunderstorms and cloud-bursts  
dire,  
Of river-banks washed down, and spreading floods  
Rendering the roads impassable. At last  
The drought is over, and my hopes at last  
Are utterly fulfilled. Success delayed  
Is sweeter when it comes, rest after strain 10  
More restful. Hard indeed has been the strain  
These three days, since I heard that Ethbaal  
To-day would offer solemn sacrifice  
To Melkart, supplicating him for rain.  
The varied chances of events I've forced  
To fit my plans, and work my full success,  
By strength of mind controlling adverse fates.

ACT I—SCENE I

17

In times of fear they who are strong command :  
 The weakling king and panic-stricken crowd—  
 Forgetful 'twas Elijah who foretold 20  
 The drought, because I boldly hurled at him  
 And at his God defiance—'neath my sway  
 Were brought by stress of famine, and I wrought  
 Upon their fears so skilfully that all  
 Who named Jehovah's name, in death or dread,  
 Perforce are silent. Now this crowning gain,  
 The rain descending at my father's prayer,  
 Makes me feel, what I am, a queen. Alone  
 Elijah hath escaped me ; but of him  
 We nothing hear : he is, no doubt, or dead 30  
 Or fled to lands remote : I need not think  
 Of him.

I hear the sound of chariot wheels.  
 'Tis Ahab, just in time returned. There is  
 No longer need to search the barren land  
 For food for horse and mule : the moistened  
 earth

In verdant garb full soon will clothe herself,  
 And brimming torrents roll through grassy fields.  
 Triumphant I can meet him, and proclaim  
 My father's answered prayer. I'll bind him fast  
 With bonds so strong he cannot break away. 40

*AHAB enters.*

Hail, Ahab, hail, join we in praise to Baal,  
 Who sends the welcome rain.

*Ahab.* Thou knowest not  
 Of what thou speakest.

*Jezebel.* This at least I know :  
To-day Ethbaal offered sacrifice  
And prayers for rain, and lo ! the rain is come.

*Ahab.* Thou vainly dreamest in some fond  
conceit ;  
But I have tidings that will turn thy joy  
To raging anguish, since thou must confess  
That in thy contest with Jehovah thou  
Art worsted.

*Jezebel.* Nay, it cannot be : to-day 50  
My lot is happiness unmixed and pure.

*Ahab.* Some prophets of the Lord, some wor-  
shippers,  
Through months of patient searching thou hast found  
And killed ; but all the prophets of thy gods  
To-day in one short hour Elijah slew.

*Jezebel.* O dreadful tidings ! nay it is not true,  
It cannot be : thou art bereft of sense,  
Or tellest of fear-sprung visions seen in sleep.

*Ahab.* Hear, if thou can'st be calm, how Israel's  
God  
Hath answered thy bold challenge. On a height 60  
Of Carmel, I assembled all the priests  
Of thy pernicious superstition, there  
To meet Elijah : one he stood alone  
Against their thousands, and the people thronged  
In crowds to see the unequal contest waged.  
To them the prophet spake : " How long halt ye  
Between two thoughts ? for if the Lord be God,  
Him worship, but if Baal, worship him."  
They answered not a word. In conscious might

He stood serene, and faced the strange - clad  
throng 70

Of foreign prophets. As some warrior bold,  
With panoply of spear-proof armour fenced,  
Faces a crowd half-armed ; secure he darts  
Contemptuous glances at them, and disdains  
First to put forth his power, but courts attack :  
Thus seemed he as he spake : " I, only I  
Remain a prophet of the Lord, but these  
Are nine times fifty men. Let them provide  
Two bullocks, choose themselves one, and prepare  
A sacrifice, and I will do the like ; 80

But let no fire be placed beneath the wood.  
Then call they on their gods, and I will call  
Upon the Lord Jehovah, and the god  
That answereth by fire, let him be God."  
The people answering said, " The word is good,"  
And Baal's prophets dared not shirk the test,  
But first prepared their bullock, and from morn  
Till noonday's heat they cried, " O Baal, hear,"  
And round the altar wove their mystic dance ;  
But no voice came, none answered. Then the  
seer, 90

With mocking words and bitter taunts of scorn,  
Urged them to cry yet louder, for their god  
Might be too busy or too indolent  
To hear his prophets. Then in frenzy wild,  
With gruesome antics and most loathly yells,  
They cut themselves until the blood gushed out  
Upon them, yet their frantic prayers were vain.  
But when the time had come for offering up

The evening sacrifice, Elijah said,  
"Come near to me, ye people," and they came. 100  
As calm to storm succeeds, so quietly  
With ordered method he began his work :  
First he repaired the altar of the Lord,  
Taking twelve stones according to the tribes  
Of Israel, and around the altar dug  
A trench profound, in order laid the wood,  
And placed the bullock on it : then he bade  
Pour water over all, and fill the trench.  
A solemn prayer he offered : " O Lord God  
Of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, 110  
Let it be known this day that Thou art God  
In Israel, and that I Thy servant am,  
And have done all these things at Thy command.  
Hear me, Lord, hear me, that these all may know  
That Thou art the Lord God, and Thou hast  
turned  
Their hearts to Thy true worship back again."  
He ceased ; then suddenly from heaven there fell  
The lightning's vivid flash ; the fire of God  
Consumed the bullock, wood, and stones, licked up  
The circumfusèd water in the trench, 120  
And scorched the very dust with fiery might :  
The people, on their faces prone, cried out,  
" The Lord He is the God, the Lord is God."  
Then at the seer's command, to Kishon's banks  
They hustled down the trembling frightened crowd  
Of Baal's prophets, not one man escaped,  
And slew them : down the long-dried river-bed  
Their blood preparèd a way for welcome streams.



*Jesebel.* And thou stood'st still and saw'st my prophets slain?

*Ahab.* Thy prophets! Could not Baal save his own?  
130

What should I do?

*Jesebel.* Thou should'st have played the man.  
Had I been there I should have found a way  
To thwart Elijah and avoid defeat.

*Ahab.* When the Lord speaks by fire, let every man

Keep silence in His presence, and confess  
That He alone is God omnipotent.

*Jesebel.* Thou art a weakling and a hypocrite!  
What use are gods, unless we make them serve  
Our purposed ends? Because by some shrewd  
trick

Elijah on thy pious fears hath wrought  
140  
Thou deemest him a god. Where is he now?

*Ahab.* He ran before my chariot to the gate—

*Jesebel.* Then I will send and slay him and  
assuage

Thy timorous fears: thou soon shalt know the gods  
Side with the strong—help those who help them-  
selves.

*Ahab.* Nay, that thou can'st not: I have straitly  
charged

To shut the gates, that none pass in or out.  
To-night at least will no one put thy word  
Before mine own. All talk of God's dread  
wrath

On thee and on thine idols vain outpoured.  
150

I have been weak, and yielded to thy will  
Too much. I married thee a foreign pest  
To Israel's tribes, and thou hast brought a dower  
Of hellish plagues, of rank idolatry,  
Upsetting the pure worship of the land  
With antic-working priests and idols foul,  
That joy in things impure, in witchcraft vile  
And whoredoms unrestrained. I own my fault,  
And thank the Lord that He at once hath  
freed  
The land from drought, and me from thralldom  
base. 160

Proud woman, cease thy useless impious strife  
Against Jehovah's awful majesty,  
Lest on thy head His direst vengeance fall.

[*Ahab goes out.*]

*Jezabel.* 'Tis ever thus with natures weak : their  
fears

Can make them almost bold, and swelling words  
Of counterfeited wrath dictate. But soon  
The unaccustomed fury burns away  
Like fire among the thorns, and leaves  
But little ash. The wise know when to yield,  
And I must yield awhile. This rage o'erblown 170  
Will leave no firm resolve behind : my power  
I'll soon regain, yea, add to it, and show  
That I am mistress : ere to-morrow's sun  
Shall reach his middle course, I will contrive  
To flatter and cajole the unstable king  
Back to his old allegiance. But so long  
Elijah must not triumph in his thoughts.

Here, slave! go forth upon the wall, and find  
This self-appointed prophet, and to him  
Shout this my message: "Let the gods do so 180  
To me, and also more, if by this time  
To-morrow I make not thy life as that  
Of one of those whom thou to-day hast slain."

[*Slave goes out.*]

That message will disturb his dreams, methinks.  
But is it wisdom thus to warn my prey  
Beforehand? I'll recall the slave. But no.  
Though he should seek to fly afar, my power  
Can fetch him back. I cannot bear that he  
Should dream of triumph even for a night.

SCENE II.—*In Gilead.*

ELIJAH and ELISHA *resting during the midday heat.*

*Elisha.* My master, often have I marvelling  
heard

Of all the noble deeds which thou hast wrought,  
Of all the noble words which thou hast said  
To uphold Jehovah's honour, for they reached,  
Borne on men's tongues, even to our quiet home—  
How boldly face to face thou hast withstood  
The fickle Ahab and his foreign queen.  
Of these thou too hast spoken; through thine  
acts  
Alone I know thee, but of thine own self,

Thy life, thy fortunes, and thy gradual growth    10  
 To power I nothing know : in common life  
 A sudden deed well done is certain proof  
 Of patient training, and a fitting word  
 In season spoken of a mind matured  
 Through use and meditation : so meseems  
 The meteor-flashes of thy ministry  
 Must spring from unseen stores of heaven-sent fire.  
 Acts sketch, but cannot wholly paint the man ;  
 Full knowledge is to know effect and cause.  
 For man is creature of a God-ruled past,                    20  
 Finite, yet formed by an infinitude  
 Of causes cognate to the infinite.

*Elijah.* By different training different temperaments  
 God fashioneth ; develops powers in one  
 Denied to another. Nurtured in the love  
 Of home, encircled by the sympathy  
 Of tender parents, thou can'st scarcely know  
 The sternness bred in friendless solitude  
 From brooding over wrongs to God and kin.  
 Thou, living in a home where ready ears                    30  
 Received each tale of childish grief, whence wealth,  
 Proportioned duly, banished want, not work,  
 Did'st learn to open up thine inmost soul  
 To others, seeking help and giving it  
 In mutual sympathy. Thus God by love  
 Fashions a nature that in love pours out  
 Itself on others, giving what it needs.  
 But I—far different was my childhood's lot—  
 Alone I stand, I ever stood alone.  
 My father's name none know, none know my own,

ACT I—SCENE II

25

Elijah is my message and my name,  
 "The Lord is God." I scarcely can recall 41  
 My early home, scarce knew my father's face :  
 Yet in mine inmost heart there lives the look  
 Of one called "mother," loving and beloved :  
 And the dread memory of one black night  
 Is stamped in scorching fire upon my soul,  
 When they, the enemies of God and man,  
 The priests of Baal burst on us—enough,  
 I dare not speak of that ; my parents died 50  
 For Israel's God.

I lived now here, now there ;  
 None loved, none pitied me, yet I was kept  
 From death, because the Lord had need of me.  
 Thus passed my joyless childhood, in the midst  
 Of hard indifference that grudging gave  
 What scarce kept off starvation, till at length,  
 When boyhood's ardent years brought strength and  
 will,

I fled from hate to loneliness, and dwelt  
 In Gilead's hills, now earning scanty fare  
 By tending sheep, now living on the store 60  
 That earth supplies through plant and insect life.  
 Converse I rarely held with men, nor told  
 My name and kindred ; for a name is sweet  
 But when employed in friendship : from the lips  
 Of foes an oath sounds sweeter than one's name.  
 Back on itself my soul was forced, and speech  
 Became a self-reflection, not a means  
 Of interchanging thoughts with other men.  
 For ever in my soul, like forest soil

Self-fertilised with leaves, the feeling grew 70  
That I was wronged, and that my wrongs were  
God's,  
And that God must avenge His wrongs and mine.

Think not that I am churlish, dearest friend,  
Spurning ungraciously thy proffered love :  
I know, I feel, thy tender sympathy,  
It thrills my soul with power unknown before :  
Yet must I bear the burden of the past  
That makes me what I am, till God's great love  
Shall cast my heart anew, and make it ring  
Aloud, responsive to the tones of love ; 80  
As yet 'tis like a bell of ponderous size  
That joyously drinks in the thrilling note  
Of some sweet instrument, but answering gives  
A sound too low to move a mortal ear.  
I am not skilled to tell thee what I feel.

*Elisha.* Dear master, pardon that I caused thee  
grief

By driving back thy thoughts to former days  
Of painful memory : I did not seek  
To satisfy mere curiosity.  
In words that well thy noble mind reveal 90  
Thou hast set forth both what thou art, and why ;  
Thy pregnant sentences, abrupt and terse,  
Mirror thy soul ; thy silence tells me more  
Than could the broidery of eloquence.  
Yet one thing more I have a right to ask,  
Since God calls me as prophet in thy room—  
How did the Lord reveal Himself to thee ?

How did'st thou learn clearly to know His will?  
Spake He in visions darkly? or as friend  
To trusted friend in open intercourse? 100  
Meseems I best can learn to hear His voice  
By learning how my master learned himself.

*Elijah.* With painful effort I have told thee more  
Of my past history than ever man  
Has heard from me; now thou bidd'st me lay bare  
The hidden secrets of mine inmost soul.  
The voice of God is rather felt than heard,  
And speaks to that deep-seated sense that lies  
Nearest our life, entwined with all we hold  
Most sacred. Who knows most of God must speak  
With greatest self-distrust, for his best words 111  
Fall far below his thoughts—much more below  
The eternal subject: thoughts that deepest lie  
Come to the birth in words with greatest pains.  
Yet man's divinest thoughts are not his own,  
But given to share with others. Thou hast claimed  
Thy right undoubted: speak I must, I will.  
When first my ripening reason dwelt on God  
I pictured Him a stern and awful Judge,  
As full of thoughts of vengeance as myself, 120  
A Being wielding power omnipotent  
Wherewith to blast His enemies and mine.  
I seemed to hear the mighty thunderings roll  
Round rocky Sinai, when in fire and smoke  
From out the darkness thick the trumpet-voice  
Proclaimed the law, and all the mountain quaked.  
Much on such themes I pondered, as alone  
I paced the barren wilds. I knew myself

Endowed with powers beyond the mass of men,  
And hoped that God would use me as the means  
To deal destruction on the rebel tribes 131  
Of Israel, and the hated name of Tyre.  
At times it seemed as if a spirit wrought  
Within my soul : forth from my solitude  
I burst amid the haunts of men, and hurled  
Great threats of vengeance at them for their sins  
Against the Lord. They held my strength in awe,  
And let me go unscathed.

Little I knew  
Of God, but just as one deprived of sight  
Gropes after things half-guessed at, so self-taught  
Did I feel after Him, and called myself 141  
His prophet, and He slowly taught me more.  
By chance I heard that Ahab and his queen  
Proposed to offer sacrifice in state  
To their false gods : a sense of strange constraint  
Possessed me—why I could not tell—to view  
The rites unholy. Long and hard I fought  
Against the feeling, but at length, like one  
Unwillingly compelled perforce, I went  
To Jezreel, and beheld the mummery foul. 150  
I loathed myself the while, and full of fear  
Lest powers of hell had seized and drawn me there  
I strove to flee, yet rooted to the spot  
I stood in anguish. When at last the priest  
Foretold in Baal's name a prosperous year,  
The Spirit of the Lord came full on me,  
And those same words that burned my soul I spake  
To Ahab : what then followed thou hast heard.



Then first I knew that by my mouth God spake ;  
Through three long years His guidance never  
failed : 160

I journeyed at His word to find my food  
And shelter, making daily, hourly proof  
Of His good providence ; yet all the while  
I learned but little more of Him, and seemed  
Like some heaven-driven machine : He ruled my  
will,  
But did not fill my soul.

There came at length  
The crowning day, the day of deep revenge,  
When God gave me such power to work great signs  
That all the people cried, "The Lord is God,"  
And slew the priests of Baal before the king. 170  
I felt myself but little less than God  
In championing His cause.

That self-same day  
He broke my pride, His Spirit was withdrawn,  
And I was left a weak and faltering man.  
How often when we think to set all right  
We find ourselves all wrong ! I thought I could  
Stand up alone and face the world in arms,  
Yet at a woman's threat I trembling fled  
In fear of life. Rebellious thoughts 'gainst God  
Inflamed my mind, and in the desert drear 180  
I laid me down and asked that I might die  
Because I was no better than my sires.  
For all the weakness of this mortal frame  
At once came on me—uttermost distress  
Of body, mind, and spirit : all seemed lost,

All I had done seemed useless, since no strength  
Was left to carry through my task. Ah then,  
Then learned I that man cannot stand alone.  
I felt the load of loneliness, and longed  
For human help and comfort, I who had shunned 190  
Till then all intercourse with other men.  
I scarce could frame a thought, or wish, or prayer—  
From very weariness of soul I slept.  
But in my direst need God's help was near ;  
His angel brought me food and drink, and bade  
Me journey on to Horeb, mount of God.  
There in a cave I lodged. Still I complained  
Because forsooth that I, weak man, alone  
Could not reform the people. Then the Word  
Bade me go forth and stand upon the mount 200  
Before the Lord. I hoped the hour had come  
When God should arm me with His thunderous  
wrath

To vindicate His name. Then suddenly a wind  
Swept up the mountain-side, not such a blast  
As piles the sea-waves up in tumult mad,  
But stronger far ; old Horeb's stony flanks  
Were torn asunder, and the solid rocks  
Were split to pieces, from their seats hurled down  
In mutual destruction, as they dashed  
Against each other, leaving a long trail 210  
Of splintered fragments to the mountain-foot.  
In trembling joy I saw God's power, yet knew  
He was not in the wind. There came a lull.  
And now the mountain's very vitals shake,  
Its firm foundations rock, it seems to reel

With direst earthquake-shocks. "Thus, thus," I  
thought,

"The Lord can shake earth's kingdoms"; yet I  
knew

He was not in the earthquake. Then a fire  
That fed on air burst with devouring heat  
Over destruction's realm; the fervid flames 220  
Blackened the rocks, that crumbling fell around  
In powder. "Thus," said I, "the fire of God  
Shall all His foes consume"; but yet I knew  
He was not in the fire. And then was borne  
A sound of gentle stillness on the air,  
A still small voice. At that my heart was filled  
With awful rapture, for I felt the voice  
Of God, and in a moment learned far more  
Than years of thought had taught me, for my  
soul

Came face to face with Him who fashioned it. 230

Now I can wait in patience, for I know  
Something of God, imperfectly indeed,  
Since I am still a man, but in my soul  
God's image ineffaceable I bear,  
And know His still small voice has greater power  
Than wind, and earthquake, and the raging fire.  
Brute force can but destroy, while God builds up,  
Working His purpose sure with steadfast aim.

Prepare thy heart, and wait God's sovereign  
will,

For thou can'st learn but what He doth reveal, 240

Nor can'st thou grasp His Being infinite,  
But only as He shows Himself to thee.  
If thou would'st know the Lord, thou must resign  
Thy will to His, His glory seek, not thine.

The heat is past: come let us journey on.

END OF ACT I.

## ACT II

SCENE I.—*The Palace at Jezreel.*

AHAB, JEZEBEL, and *Girls in attendance.*

*Jezebel.* The king is strangely sad—beyond his wont  
Depressed and silent : yet I know no cause.  
Sing, girls, a joyous song to cheer his mood.

*1st Girl.* Spring-time has brought us genial  
sunshine,  
Winter's storms are passed and gone ;  
In all the gardens buds are bursting,  
Merrily birds in the trees are singing.

*Chorus of Girls.* Hail to the spring with her sun  
and flowers !  
Welcome her treasures sweet ;  
Joyously tripping through verdant bowers 10  
Render our homage meet.

*1st Girl.* Scent-laden zephyrs whisper gladness,  
Bearing fragrance from afar ;

The ocean breezes ere they reach us  
Gather the nectar of Sharon's roses.

*Chorus.* Hail to the spring with her balmy breath,  
Welcome her treasures rare;  
Passed is the season of cold and death;  
Cast away painful care.

*Ahab.* Enough, enough, I cannot bear your  
songs; 20  
My heart is heavy, and I would be still.

[*Girls go out.*]

*Jezebel.* What ails my loved one? why this  
strange sad mood?

Wilt thou not tell a loving wife thy pain?

*Ahab.* The words of that young prophet in mine  
ears

Are ringing still, who chid me in God's name  
Because I let Benhadad go in peace.

*Jezebel.* Thou would'st deceive me, for thyself  
hast proved

That he was bribed by foes to break the truce  
Which thou hast wisely made with Syria's king.  
In prison now he rues his treacherous guile. 30  
There is some other cause: tell me the truth.

*Ahab.* I will, though half-ashamed to own a grief  
So trifling. Often has it vexed me sore  
That scanty gardens mar the full effect  
Of this our chosen home. Close by our bounds,  
Sloping delightfully towards the east,  
Lies Naboth's vineyard. Had I but that plot

I could complete our gardens, lay them out  
With pleached alleys and fair terraced walks,  
And make this palace fit to be our home. 40  
To-day I spake with Naboth, offered him  
Full price in money, or in fair exchange  
Another vineyard, but he would not yield  
His land. It is indeed a trivial cause,  
But I had set my heart upon my plan.

*Jezebel.* Dost thou now govern Israel? Wherefore  
ask

A favour when thou well can'st claim a right?

*Ahab.* By Israel's laws each man's inheritance  
Is sacred, and I dare not raise revolt  
By breaking customs sanctified by age. 50

*Jezebel.* Can laws and customs thus control a  
king?

In Tyre we thought not thus. Rise, eat and drink,  
And let thy heart be merry: then go forth  
And plan thy garden. Ere two days are passed  
Will I give Naboth's vineyard unto thee.  
Lend me thy signet-ring, and be at ease.

*Ahab.* I scarce can trust thee, lest some bloody  
deed

Bring vengeance on us both.

*Jezebel.* Be not afraid,  
My hands I'll keep as clean as thine, yet try  
Persuasion such as he will scarce resist. 60

[*Ahab gives the ring, and goes out.*]

This churl then pleads Jehovah's sacred law  
To thwart the king: I'll thwart him by that law  
Wherein 'tis writ that who blasphemeth the Lord

Shall die by stoning. No one will suspect  
That Jezebel enforced the penalty,  
And I shall rid me of a constant foe.

SCENE II.—*The Palace Gardens at Jezreel.*

AHAB *and* JEZEBEL *walking.* JEHU *and* BIDKAR  
*in the background in attendance on the King.*

*Ahab.* See, there the central walk should run,  
with trees  
And flower-beds bordered, and with statues fair  
Half-hidden in the shrubs : at either end  
A fountain should spread freshness o'er the scene ;  
A hundred wandering paths should lead one's steps  
Along the terraced hillside, at each turn  
Affording to the eye delightful views  
Of Jordan's deep-cut valley, while beyond  
Rise in the distance Gilead's grey-blue hills.  
Oh ! I could spend a happy peaceful year 10  
In laying out this heavenly spot, a task  
Nearer my heart than wars and policies :  
And yet this churl refuses me the land.

*Jezebel.* Possess the land : the dead can urge no  
claim.

*Ahab.* The dead, sayest thou ? 'tis Naboth owns  
the plot.

*Jezebel.* Know Naboth is not now alive, but dead.

*Ahab.* Dead ! who but yesterday was strong and  
well.



*Jezebel.* Towards evening he was slain by just decree.

*Ahab.* In justice's name hast thou a murder schemed?

*Jezebel.* He died for blasphemy against his God. 20

*Ahab.* Yet he was noted for his piety.

*Jezebel.* He was a hypocrite, as others are.

*Ahab.* But now his sons will claim his heritage.

*Jezebel.* His sons died with him—such is Israel's law—

And all his lands are forfeit to the king.

Ask no more questions, but enjoy the boon

The favouring gods have sent. Now must I go ;

Affairs of state demand my instant care.

*[Jezebel goes out.]*

*Ahab.* Affairs of state demand her instant care !

She treats me like a child, gives me a toy, 30

And bids me play with it, while she attends

To state affairs, frames policies and leagues,

Involves me in so intricate a mass

Of treaties and alliances confused

That I am fain to seek from her the clue

To thread the maze, and let her rule in deed

While I in name am king. I fear the king

Who lets another rule must bear the blame,

And harvest crops of guilt he never sowed.

Yet why torment myself? 'Tis easier far 40

To let her have her way, while I enjoy

Congenial pleasures.

Naboth then is dead :

He lies a bleeding, mangled, stone-bruised corpse,  
Now half-devoured perchance by dogs ; and I  
Am owner of the land so long desired.

It is strange how our desires lose half their worth  
When once attained. I almost wish he lived,  
The brave, bold-hearted fellow, who could tell  
His king that he was wrong, and make me  
feel,

“ Here is a man indeed ” : he was not framed 50

To fawn and flatter, and to ape the ways  
In vogue at court, and tune a double tongue  
To praise the deity that seems uppermost.

An Israelite indeed, he feared his God

And nothing else. Yet was he stoned, she said,

For blasphemy. Strange, strange past all belief,

That he, who would have sacrificed his life

Rather than sell his land against the law,

Should curse God. Could the charge be false, made  
up

By an enemy ? If so—just heaven forbid— 60

What enemy but Jezebel should seek

His life ? But no—she would not have conceived

A charge thus based on Israel's ancient law—

Such blasphemy is a virtue in her eyes.

Why should I then suspect the queen ? Why  
ask

How, when, and where he died ? Enough for me

That he is dead, and I possess his land.

I never sought his death, I only wished

That he were dead, or somehow put aside

So as not to thwart me : I am clear of guilt,      70  
And easy in my conscience can pass through  
The gate and take the land.

*[He approaches a gate between the palace  
garden and Naboth's vineyard.]*

Just there he stood—

I almost seem to see him standing now—  
There in the gateway, as he boldly said,  
“The Lord forbid it me that I should give  
The inheritance of my fathers unto thee.”  
The stern determination of his face,  
The close-shut mouth and piercing steel-grey eyes  
Stamped him as one whose words would ne’er  
belie

His faith. And yet he died for blasphemy!—      80  
I will pass through the gate and take the land.

*[Enters the vineyard.]*

There stood his sons, as, pausing in their work,  
They listened to their sire’s brave words, and showed  
Approval of his firmness. Their bent brows  
And steadfast gaze fixed on me made me flinch  
Despite myself. They were indeed a band  
Of sturdy, stalwart youths. I wished my sons  
Looked strong and frank as they. Now they are  
dead—

Their bodies rot beneath the scorching sun—  
And I stand owner on their heritage.      90  
But why delay to take my lawful right?  
I will secure the outer gate, and set  
My seal upon it. Where is my signet-ring?  
Can I have lost it? Ah! I now recall

The queen asked for it when she undertook  
To give me Naboth's land in two days' time.  
I never dreamed fate would make good her word,  
But thought she spoke to cheer my downcast  
heart.

Can she have used that ring to wreak her wrath  
On one she hated as a bitter foe 100  
To her new deities, prepared to say  
'Twas done for my sake? At the very thought  
My blood runs cold, I feel another Cain.

Hence with such fancies! I am not a child,  
I am the king—not thus to be unnerved:  
This land is mine, and I at least am clear  
From stain of blood. I am the king, and none,  
Though dark suspicions of foul play arise,  
Dare question openly my royal rights.

What form is that? I am a fool to start 110  
As though a guilty conscience made me see  
The blood-avenger in each passer-by.  
Ye mighty gods protect me!—'Tis the Tishbite!  
It is Elijah: there is no escape,  
And I must bear the madness of his words.

*Elijah.* Thus saith the Lord: "King Ahab, hast  
thou killed?

And also ta'en possession? In the place  
Where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, there  
Shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine, O king."

*Ahab.* Hast thou now found me, O mine  
ememy? 120

*Elijah.* I have found thee, for thou hast sold thyself

To work all evil in the sight of God.

*Ahab.* Ho, Jehu, Bidkar, seize him! call the guard!

*Elijah.* Stand still, and hear the burden by the Lord

Laid on this murderer: "Surely I have seen  
The blood of Naboth yesterday outpoured,  
And his sons' blood: and in this very plat,  
Will I requite thee," saith the Lord the God.

*Ahab.* Thou liest! Jehu, Bidkar, will ye stand  
And hear me falsely, traitorously reviled? 130

*Jehu.* The noble Naboth died a felon's death,  
Condemned on witness borne by two vile men:  
So much is true; who bribed the witnesses  
I cannot say.

*Ahab.* Thou bold, ill-nurtured clown,  
Thou darest not say I know, unless indeed  
In this mad prophet's presence all men think  
Their folly privileged. Thou shalt rue the hour  
When thy tongue framed vague charges against  
me.

I will not let thee live to raise revolt.

*Elijah.* Cease from thy wrath, and hear what thou  
hast done. 140

Thou did'st not dare thyself to plan the death  
Of Naboth and his sons, for fear a crime  
Wrought openly against the law should rouse  
The sullen multitude: but thou did'st give  
Thy signet-ring to one who knows no fear

Of God or man. When the foul deed was done  
Thou thoughtest to reap the fruit without the guilt.  
Who sins in wish, and when the wish breeds  
deeds

Repents not, but condones the bloody crime,  
Taking advantage of another's sin, 150  
Is wholly guilty both of wish and deed.  
Now hear thy sentence just. Thus saith the Lord :  
" Behold, I will bring evil upon thee,  
And thy posterity will I take away,  
And I will make thine house like to the house  
Of Jeroboam, Nebat's evil son,  
Because like him thou hast provoked My wrath,  
And made My people Israel to sin."  
This sentence on thy queen : " By Jezreel's wall  
Shall dogs eat Jezebel. Of Ahab's seed 160  
Who in the city dies the dogs shall eat,  
Who in the field the fowls of the air shall eat."

*Jehu* [*Aside to Bidkar*]. Stern is the doom, but it  
is well deserved.

*Ahab*. O man of God, thou hast shown me my  
heart

And called to my remembrance all my sin.  
Above all idols is the Lord thy God  
In righteousness exalted. I have sinned,  
I rend my clothes, and on my naked flesh  
Will sackcloth put, will fast, nor to my bed  
Go up, but lie on sackcloth, and bemoan 170  
My sin, and barefoot walk. And as each year  
Brings round the fatal day, in humble guise  
I will entreat the Lord to stay His hand.

*Elijah.* Hast thou learned now at last to know  
thyself?

It scarce can be, since God in justice lays  
On the hypocrite self-moving punishment,  
Ever to deceive himself, and, stony blind,  
While he thinks others so, rush on at length  
To obvious destruction, taking lies,  
So oft his refuge, for the truth, and truth       180  
For falsehood. Lying spirits God employs  
To punish liars. Dost thou indeed repent?  
Or thinkest thou that for the nonce the Lord  
Is strongest? Wert thou strong enough to sin  
Unpunished, thou wouldest say, "Might measures  
right."

The suddenness of thy repentant grief  
Argues its insincerity, and bodes  
No long continuance. Once forsooth ere now  
Did'st thou repent, and own on Carmel's mount  
The power of God supreme. Were I thy  
judge       190

I would not hear thy plea, that cursèd plea,  
Wherewith all Adam's sons their guilt excuse,  
"The woman tempted me, and I did sin."  
Hast thou a wife more wicked than thyself?  
A greater wrong makes not thy wrong less  
wrong.

Thou shalt be known to fame as worst of kings,  
Slave of the worst of women, who contrives  
To work outrageous and unnatural ills  
Upon thy country, teaching Israel's sons  
To wallow in all wanton wickedness       200

For its own sake. She is the incarnation  
Of that most devilish and adulterous spirit,  
That needs, as relish to its jaded lust,  
To outrage sacred rights, that tramples down  
All laws and customs, human and divine,  
And deeper sins to add a zest to sin.  
In years to come her hated name shall pair  
With Balaam's, who for loathsome love of gold  
Taught Balak to tempt Israel, but in guilt  
She far excels him, sinning for love of sin. 210  
And thou—thou who alone could'st check her  
crimes,  
Art fain to profit by them, hoping still  
To avoid the penalty, with fear-wrung groans  
Of hypocritical repentance praying  
That God will stay His hand. God stay His  
hand!  
When from the ground the blood of Naboth cries,  
Joined with the blood of Naboth's guiltless sons,  
When the spilt blood of murdered prophets cries,  
When shattered altars of Jehovah cry,  
When sanctuaries profaned by idols cry, 220  
When broken laws and rights down-trodden cry,  
When subjects forced to thine idolatry cry  
For vengeance on thee, shall God stay His hand?  
Oh, I would doom thee to such fiery woes  
As should just not destroy thee, leaving thee  
But power to suffer. Hold! I speak as man,  
Who should have learned that God's ways are not  
ours.  
It may be that His mercy, infinite



Beyond all reach of human thought, will hear  
Thy prayer. Go to thine house: in penitence 230  
Unlearn idolatry and tyranny,  
And I will bring thee word if God gives peace.

END OF ACT II.

## ACT III

SCENE I.—*An open space before a Palace at Ramoth-Gilead.*

JEHU, BIDKAR, AHIJAH, and other Captains of the  
*Army of Israel seated on a terrace at the top of  
a flight of steps.*

*Ahijah.* The time is ripening for a daring stroke.  
The nation groans too long beneath the sway  
Of her who has ruled our rulers, sire and sons.  
The army sickens of these foreign gods,  
Whose worship kills all manhood, makes our men  
Like women, makes our women only meet  
To wanton in impurity and lust,  
Not fit to mother sons, their country's strength.  
The flower of Israel camps around us here ;  
We are the nation, we demand a king ;                    10  
Not one who deems a paltry wound fit cause  
To change the toils of men for pillowed ease  
In his luxurious mother's baneful bowers,  
And sport with kindred spirits—shameless girls  
And Judah's puppet-prince and all his train.  
We need a king who shall be king indeed,  
Unteach his subjects this base womanish sloth,

And make them men : fit sire of mighty sons  
To carry on his work. A land can have  
No greater blessing than a powerful race 20  
Of princes trained to know and do their duty.  
Thou, Jehu, art the man !

*Jehu.* Nay, by your leave,  
I will not venture on such perilous heights.  
The army might at first acclaim me king,  
But all are bound in superstition's chains,  
And soon would fall back to their former lord,  
Unless, by signal proofs convinced, they deemed  
Their new king chosen of heaven. I cannot stoop  
To practise on their dull credulity.  
And you who bid me scale the topmost height, 30  
Yourselves not risking such a dizzy fall,  
Would be the first to leave me there  
Alone.

*JONAH enters.*

*Jonah.* I have an errand unto thee,  
O captain !

*Jehu.* Unto which of all of us ?

*Jonah.* To thee, O captain ! Come with me apart.

*[Jehu and Jonah pass into the palace.]*

*Ahijah.* Why must some mischance always interrupt  
Affairs of moment ? 'Twill be doubly hard  
To start again, and I had well begun.  
I could have shown him we would not draw back  
But follow even to peril of our lives. 40  
To instant action I'd have urged him on  
Had not this fellow come with some mad tale.

He seems a wandering prophet by his garb.  
 The unhappy land is plagued with rival schools  
 Of idle men who claim to serve now one  
 And now another god—a mere excuse  
 For tale-bearing and alms-fed indolence.  
 Say, comrades, did I well perform your trust?

*Bidkar.* Little thou skill'st of Jehu's character !  
 Since boyhood I have known him : never man 50  
 Could force him on. His stern unbending will  
 Acts on its proper impulse, nor endures  
 Constraint from others. Thou should'st have led up  
 By slow degrees to such a dangerous theme,  
 And left the clenching word to him. He sees  
 The facts as well as we, and knows himself  
 Sole master of the occasion. All men's eyes  
 Are fixed on him : he feels it, and will act  
 When he thinks all is ready—not before.

*[Jonah rushes out from the palace.]*

But see, this fellow flees like one possessed. 60  
 From Jehu we shall learn what brought him here.

*JEHU enters.*

*Ahijah.* Is all well, Jehu ? tell us, wherefore came  
 This mad fellow to thee ?

*Jehu.* Ye know the man,  
 Ye know his message, for ye put the words  
 Into his mouth to gain your end by guile.

*Ahijah.* 'Tis false, 'tis false, we swear it ! Tell  
 us now.

*Jehu.* Sent by Elisha, thus his message ran :  
 " Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee

King over Israel"; then he poured the oil  
Of consecration on me, and fled forth. 70

*Bidkar.* Jehu is king! Quick, let the trumpets  
sound

A royal welcome! Here upon the stairs  
Lay every man his garment to enthrone  
King Jehu: let the soldiers see their king.

*[Trumpets sound: Soldiers crowd in.]*

Comrades, soldiers, pay your rightful homage;  
Acclaim king Jehu, with the sacred oil  
Anointed duly at Jehovah's word

King over Israel. Long live Israel's king!

*Captains and Soldiers.* Long live King Jehu! hail!  
long live the king!

*Jehu.* Few words befit the time. I thank you all. 80  
I will not shrink when heaven points out the way.  
If it be then your mind to share with me  
This dangerous enterprise, watch well the walls  
That none escape to tell it in Jezreel.  
Make ready, for we will at once set forth  
To bear ourselves the news of our revolt.  
Who quickly moves can laugh at foes unwarned.  
Make ready! for our cause brooks no delay.

SCENE II.—*Chamber in the Watch-tower at Jezreel,  
overlooking Naboth's Vineyard and the Jordan  
Valley.*

JEZEBEL and ATHALIAH.

*Jezebel.* It is great joy to have thee here once  
more,

My one true child, thou who alone can'st share  
 In fullest sympathy my cherished plans  
 And help to work them out. Well hast thou learned  
 The kingly lore I taught, disclosing all  
 My inmost mind, that thou mightest understand  
 Both how to form and how to carry through  
 High purposes of statecraft. Thou hast been  
 From childhood's years the partner of my thoughts,  
 Half of myself: together we have wrought 10  
 With single aim, and now, two widowed queens,  
 Each ruling through her son, we have re-joined  
 The severed parts of David's mighty realm,  
 And brought all Israel's tribes beneath the sway  
 Of Ethbaal's house in fact if not in name.  
 It is a mighty purpose well achieved.  
 Now must we take good counsel to maintain  
 Our power.

*Watchman* [on the tower to *Warder below*]. The  
 company comes on apace.

*Jesebel*. No doubt the watchman sees the princely  
 train

Of Judah's house: they come before we thought. 20  
 Does not this noble gathering put the crown  
 On our desires, and show that we have built  
 Our power on firm foundations which shall stand  
 For ages, that the house of Jezebel  
 May scorn its rivals and outlast them all?

*Athaliah*. Scarcely could Judah's princes yet  
 arrive;

But still I cannot guess who else should come.  
 Back to our purpose: thou art growing old,

And can'st not read so clearly as of yore  
The signs of approaching trouble. We bear rule 30  
Through weaklings, and their folly mars our  
strength.

A spirit of discontent is spread abroad :  
The vulgar herd must see the iron rod  
That rules them, or in fancied liberty  
Each man grows bold, and with his neighbour talks  
Foul treason : so they fan each other's wrath,  
And draw on others to their traitorous plans :  
They gather courage as their numbers grow,  
And seethe into rebellion past control.  
Dogs fawn and whimper when they see the  
whip ; 40

But if they see it not, they join in bands,  
Each coward cur grows brave among his mates,  
And the ravening pack becomes a scourge to all.  
The time for half-measures is now long passed :  
They who would rule must rule in fact and name.

*Jezabel.* Nay, nay, my child, be guided still by me,  
Nor cast away true power to gain its show.  
'Tis best to let another wear the crown  
And bear the toils and envy that it brings,  
While we are free to think and act unseen, 50  
Controlling all things. Thou hast learned of me  
This policy, and by it hast gained success.

*Athaliah.* The times are changing, and thou art  
too old  
To change with them. What thou call'st policy  
Seems to our subjects weakness, for they deem  
Our rule no stronger than the kings they see.

In bygone days thou hast had great success :  
 But now the powers that muster are too strong  
 For thine enfeebled—

*Jezebel.*                   Speakest thou this to me?  
 Am I a dotard? do my hand and head                   60  
 Tremble with palsied age, that mine own child  
 Here in Jezreel dare use such words to me?  
 Unnatural daughter, wert thou thrice my child,  
 If thou begin to work against my will,  
 I'll hurl thee from the throne into the dust,  
 And teach thee that thou art but what I will.

*Athaliah.* Let not thine anger give thee fancied  
 strength,  
 And threaten not, lest I should prove myself  
 Thy child indeed, mindful of good advice  
 Oft heard of thee, "Who threatens must not live." 70

*Jezebel.* Thou poisonous asp—  
*Watchman* [*on the tower to Warder below*]. The  
 messenger came to them,  
 But cometh not again.

*Jezebel.*                   Thou poisonous asp—  
*Athaliah.* Restrain thy wrath: there is no time to  
 waste.  
 See'st thou that cloud of dust? From Jordan's  
 vale

They come, not Judah. I too well foresaw  
 The ending of thy vaunted policy.  
 I always said 'twas folly to maintain  
 An army far from home so many years:  
 Conscious of power, they deem themselves supreme  
 To make and unmake kings: now in revolt           80



They hither rush, and both the kings are caught  
As in a trap. What counsel givest thou now?

*Jezebel.* Perchance 'tis but a party sent with news.

*Athaliah.* Why send a band? one horseman  
would suffice.

*Jezebel.* Jehu commands in Gilead: he is sure.

*Athaliah.* He is the very idol of the troops.

*Jezebel.* And therefore well can keep them in  
control.

*Athaliah.* And therefore can well bend them to  
his will.

*Jezebel.* He is too shrewd to dare a risky stroke.

*Athaliah.* Then his success is certain when he  
strikes. 90

*Watchman* [*on the tower to Warder below*]. The  
driving is like the driving of Nimshi's son  
Jehu, for lo! he driveth furiously.

*Athaliah.* Thou hearest! Now take counsel how  
to escape

Destruction, for he dares no risky stroke.

*Voices without.* Make ready the chariots! quick!  
make ready in haste.

*Jezebel.* Oh maddening folly! Joram sallies  
forth,

But half-prepared, to meet the enemy.

Run quickly, slave, and bid the reckless king

Abide within the walls: 'tis Jezebel commands.

[*Slave goes out.*]

My Athaliah, we will not tamely yield; 100

The walls are strong, the approaches all are steep,

Our guards are men of steadfast loyalty.

*Athaliah.* Trust no one ; once rebellion is abroad,  
The very eunuchs of thy bedchamber  
Would gladly sell thee to the conqueror.

*Jezebel.* Oh, I am glad to have thee with me now !  
And yet thou art a sorry comforter.

*Athaliah.* My plan is fixed. 'Tis certain both  
our sons  
Will fall before this Jehu. Hence at once  
I will escape, and to Jerusalem 110  
Will quickly fly, and there will reign as queen  
Alone, nor trust my fate in others' hands  
To make or mar.

*Slave [returning].* King Joram bids me say—  
I greatly tremble to repeat his words,  
Hold me not guilty of them, mighty queen,  
For I was bidden to say these very words—  
“ War is for men, not women ; let me be.”

*Athaliah.* Thus at the fateful hour of final chance  
The puppet breaks his chains, and rushes on  
In heedless haste to wreck himself and thee. 120  
From such mischance I'll make myself secure.

*Jezebel.* Yet pause, nor rashly act without due  
thought.  
If Ahaziah falls, his brethren will,  
At tidings of his death, or seize the throne  
Themselves, or set one of his sons thereon.

*Athaliah.* His brethren are already half-way here ;  
Unwarned, at Jehu's hands they well may fall.  
And Ahaziah's sons are mortal too.

*Jezebel.* To gain the throne would'st thou thy  
grandsons slay ?

*Athaliah.* Whoever stands 'twixt me and my  
desire. 130

*Jezebel.* Oh cruelty past belief! unnatural crime!

*Athaliah.* My acts are but the outcome of thy  
words.

*Jezebel.* I ne'er taught thee to murder thine own  
kin.

*Athaliah.* Yes, teaching me to put self first of all.

*Jezebel.* Yet do not needlessly imbrue thy hands

With kindred blood: I have a better plan.

Jehu is passing shrewd; full well he knows

The perilous chances of a dynasty

Fresh-founded, unfenced by the majesty

That comes of age, resting but on the will 140

Of men who have already earned the art

Of making kings: quick built is quick destroyed.

From Zimri's fate he will a warning take,

Who slew his lord, and reigned a seven-day reign.

But if he mate with Ahab's former queen,

And with the royal line of Ethbaal,

He'll draw the magic of antiquity

And custom's sanction, planted in men's minds,

Around his house, and build a stable throne

Deep-rooted in the past. I'll cast my spells 150

Around his heart, and draw him to my feet.

Choose thou the fittest of Ahaziah's sons,

Set him on Judah's throne, and train him up

To do thy will; then in alliance close

Conjoined, we'll rule with undisputed sway.

*Athaliah.* Thou vainly dotest on thy bygone  
charms,

Withered in wit and features. I fly hence  
And leave thee to essay thy fore-doomed plans.  
Yet scarcely can I tear me from the sight:  
The armies meet.

[*Both look out of the window.*

[*Joram's voice heard in the distance.*]

There is treachery, O Ahaziah. 160

[*Joram falls in his chariot, killed by Jehu's arrow.*

[*Jehu's voice heard in the distance.*]

Bidkar, take up and cast him in this plot  
Of Naboth's vineyard; thus will we fulfil  
The words the man of God, Elijah, spake.

*Jezebel.* Alas! I hear the Tishbite's hated name.  
Comes he with that upon his lips? Then all,  
All, all is lost; I am undone; I reel,  
My reason totters. I will fly with thee,  
Thou wilt give me protection and a home.

*Athaliah.* I will not brook a partner on my  
throne.

*Jezebel.* Oh, I will serve thee like the meanest  
slave. 170

*Athaliah.* Thou could'st not bend thee to a second  
place,

As slave or equal thou would'st still intrigue.  
Farewell! I grieve to see thee such a wreck  
Of thine old self. Once with bold words did'st  
thou

Challenge Elijah's God to do His worst.  
Now that the hour is come, thou seem'st less  
bold.

Follow me not, or I will strike thee dead.

*Jezebel.* Ye gods of heaven ! Oh, send me some relief !

I am distraught : hear me, ye gods of hell !  
If I have served you well, then hear my prayer. 180  
Look on the outrageous monster I have bred ;  
Fulfil on her my curse. Let her be damned  
In tortures beyond thought ; to hideous crimes  
Impel her on that she may reap all woes  
That earth and sky and heaven and hell can  
yield.

Raise her up high, that she may deeper fall,  
And fall ; and falling taste the bitterest dregs  
Of the brimming cup of blood filled by herself.  
Let ghastly faces haunt her day and night  
Of infants murdered to build up her throne 190  
Of bleeding corpses formed, where queen of death  
She reigns in anguish. Make her mother's curse,  
Unheard in life, ring in her dying ears.  
Let her not die the pleasant death of one  
Who bravely falls beneath a foeman's sword,  
But slay her by the hands of those she wronged,  
That she may reap the fruits of villainy.

I must not despair—I, the great Jezebel—  
I'll stake my fortunes on the final cast.

*[Begins to arrange her hair and to paint her face.  
Meanwhile Jehu and his forces are heard ap-  
proaching. Jezebel leans out of the window as  
he passes.]*

Had Zimri peace, he who his master killed, 200  
And reigned a week ?

*Jehu* [outside].           Who is on my side, who?

[*Two Eunuchs look out of the window.*

Then throw her down.

[*The Eunuchs throw Jezebel out of the window :  
she falls in front of Jehu's chariot.*

Drive on, drive over her,

And trample out her witchcrafts with her blood.

END OF ACT III.

## NOTES

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*Prologue* :—

Line 16: *Melkart*. The Tyrian name of Baal.

Line 31: *Ethbaal*. According to Menander, quoted by Josephus, Eithobal (who may be safely identified with the Ethbaal of the Bible) was a priest of Astarte or Ashtoreth, and placed himself on the throne of Tyre by murder. He is called in the Bible "king of the Sidonians," where the name is used in the wider sense of Phœnicians, and includes the Tyrians.

Line 62: *Engannim*. The name means "Fountain of Gardens." This spring was the main source of the Kishon.

Line 110. In many ancient religions the priests addressed the deities by titles only divulged to the fully initiated.

Line 150. Cf. 1 Kings xvii. 1.

Act I. Scene i. Cf. 1 Kings xix. 1 f.

Line 14. Menander, quoted by Josephus, mentions the long drought, and says that rain came in answer to Ethbaal's prayers.

## Act I. Scene ii.

Line 40. Contrary to the usual custom, the name of Elijah's father is not given in the Bible. It is probable that his own name also has been lost, and that he was called Elijah ("Jehovah is God") after the main subject of his teaching.

Line 225: *A sound of gentle stillness*. This is the literal translation of the Hebrew in 1 Kings xix. 12.

## Act II. Scene i. Cf. 1 Kings xxi.

Line 24: *young prophet*. Cf. 1 Kings xx. 35 ff. Josephus says this prophet was Micaiah, the son of Imlah, of whom we hear again chap. xxii., on which occasion he was apparently sent *back* to prison, not sent there for the first time.

## Act II. Scene ii. Cf. 1 Kings xxi.

Line 54. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament Naboth is called "the Israelite" instead of "the Jezreelite." This is probably merely a confusion of similar names, but it is suggestive.

Line 124: *hear the burden*. Cf. 2 Kings ix. 25 f.

Line 171: *and as each year, etc.* The Greek translation of 1 Kings xxi. 27 seems to imply that Ahab observed the anniversary of Naboth's murder as a day of mourning.

Line 181. Cf. 1 Kings xxii. 22.

Lines 207, 208: *her hated name shall pair with Balaam's*. Cf. Revelation ii. 14, 20.

## Act III. Scene I. Cf. 2 Kings ix. 1 ff.

Line 33. The young man was said by tradition to be the future prophet Jonah.



Act III. Scene ii. Cf. 2 Kings ix. 16 ff. It is at least not impossible that Athaliah accompanied her son, Ahaziah, king of Judah, on his visit to Joram, king of Israel.

Lines 19, 20: *the princely train of Judah's house*. Cf. 2 Kings x. 13 f.

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